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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000456

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SU](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR: BOUTEFLIKA TELLS NEA A/S WELCH ALGERIA
READY TO WORK WITH U.S. FOR A SOLUTION

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Darfur was one of the main subjects covered in a two-hour meeting March 14 between NEA Assistant Secretary David Welch and President Bouteflika (other subjects reported septels). A/S Welch stressed President Bush's personal interest in Darfur and U.S. concern at the continued violence and deteriorating humanitarian situation. We wanted to shift the mission to a UN mandate with a role for Arab and Muslim countries. The UN mandate would increase the mission's financial resources and bring in other contributors. We were not promoting NATO intervention, but rather NATO logistical support and assistance. Bouteflika reviewed what he termed Sudan's gradual progress, with Algerian encouragement, away from sponsoring terrorism to becoming an Arab and African country with its own problems. Bouteflika agreed that a large part of the AU, including Algeria, now supported re-hatting the peacekeeping mission; suggested it would work best if Khartoum did not see the UN role as a U.S. initiative; and offered Algeria's good offices to bring President Bashir on board. A/S Welch said the U.S. was in touch with Libya and Egypt as well, and was counting on Bouteflika to help. Bouteflika assured Welch that he would speak to Bashir and try to bring him around. End Summary.

GROWING CONCERN ABOUT DARFUR

12. (C) A/S Welch, accompanied by Ambassador and DCM, raised the deteriorating situation in Darfur with President Bouteflika, observing that the suffering of the Sudanese people was on President Bush's mind. There appeared to be some misunderstanding in the Arab world about U.S. intentions in Darfur. We were not seeking to intervene, but we did not think the AU could handle the mission on its own and we doubted Khartoum intended to calm the situation. Shifting the mandate to the UN would increase the financial resources available as well as attracting other contributors. In response to Bouteflika's question about the Arab role, Welch said the U.S. wanted Muslim countries to contribute, including Arabs. We were not looking for NATO to intervene directly, but NATO could play a helpful supporting and planning role. The U.S. wanted to end the violence while preserving Sudan's sovereignty.

13. (C) Bouteflika said the AU was in charge of the Darfur issue, but the AU lacked the means to maintain the mission. If the AU could not handle the mission, there would have to be a UN role. The AU had come close to a split over this and had decided to give Sudan until the next AU summit in September to settle the problem, but Bashir was being unwise by playing to the street and seeking to present Darfur as a

confrontation with the U.S. Bashir, he said, would not be able to content himself with the support of Libya against a large part of the AU that wanted the UN involved. Bouteflika recommended a step-by-step approach with the Sudanese, working for UN involvement without letting Khartoum think of the UN's role as a U.S. demand.

SUDAN NO LONGER A TERRORIST STATE

¶4. (C) Bouteflika recalled that when he first took office in 1999, Sudan was still supporting terrorism in Algeria. He said he had asked President Bashir who made Sudan's policy, him or Hassan Turabi? Algeria had worked with Bashir gradually to end Turabi's influence, and had then promoted an end to the conflict with the south by engaging Garang and convincing Bashir that Garang was not a secessionist. Bouteflika said he was willing to use Algeria's channels with the Sudanese to help the U.S., but the U.S. must be clear about its goals in Sudan. Bouteflika noted he had played a similar role with Libya, and had managed to always be fair to both the U.S. and the Libyans. If the U.S. wanted good relations with Sudan, Algeria could help. Bashir, he asserted, was essentially motivated by power, not ideology, so it should be possible to make a deal with him.

WORKING WITH KEY ARABS

¶5. (C) A/S Welch said the U.S. was also in touch with Libya and Egypt, which along with Algeria we considered to be the key Arab voices on this issue. We were counting on Algeria to help. Bouteflika said he would "speak frankly" to Bashir, who believed that internationalizing Darfur would undermine his regime. Bouteflika would try to try to create trust and

ALGIERS 00000456 002.2 OF 002

turn Bashir around. Sudan, he noted, was no longer an exporter of terrorism, but rather an Afro-Arab state with its own unique problems. Working together, it should be possible to change Sudan's position.

¶6. (U) A/S Welch has cleared this message.

¶7. (U) Minimize considered.

ERDMAN